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RESONATING WITH REMEMBRANCE

by Peter Spiro

Peter Spiro is a playwright and poet. His plays have been produced in New York City and Los Angeles; his poetry has been widely published in magazines and anthologies. Pete has appeared on the PBS special "The United States of Poetry" and MTV's Spoken Word Unplugged, and he recently gave a reading/interview on National Public Radio. While he was attending the August 16 Gateway Voyage[®], a trainer suggested that he write to us about his experiences with Hemi-Sync[®] and the "thugs" he teaches. This is his response.

I've taught in an alternative high school program here in New York City for the past eight years. I teach students who, for one reason or another, have not succeeded in either mainstream schools or other alternative settings. This is the end of the road in the part of town where only outlaws and fools travel by foot. A dozen graduates in a year is good. A graduate who goes on to college is phenomenal. Things are getting worse. Last year I had three graduates. Year by year the students get harder, meaner, more lost. No one cooks for these kids, no one seems to raise them. So they make up their own rules and codes for survival. It's not a jungle because there aren't enough trees. It's a landscape of bones stripped of meat and cartilage. Kids kill each other over minor insults. The hottest career choice is to become an undertaker.

When I grew up here in Brooklyn, you might get whacked with a bat, stomped, punched, your ass kicked. But you survived; you had a chance to retaliate or find another way to mend your battered ego. Not anymore. Now, each decision can become your last. It's a deadly game requiring a sharp mind, quick reflexes, heightened senses, and swift, decisive action. If you survive childhood, you're a combat veteran. My goal is to help someone out of the battle. But the diploma is more like separation papers than a testament of academic achievement.

Last year started like any other year. My classroom is a basement room in a building in a housing project. And there are the students: restless, disturbed, fatigued, undernourished, fearful, and on edge. So I bought a boom box with detachable speakers, spread the speakers out along the back of the room, and began one day by playing Hemi-Sync[®]. The tape was *Remembrance*. I expected nothing. One particular kid, who normally survives each day by emulating the behavior of a monkey on a pogo stick, took a seat up front and quietly completed each assignment efficiently and timely. Most of the class thought he was absent! Still, I doubted whether the tape alone had helped him achieve this state of contentment.

But the same thing happened the next day, and every day thereafter as long as *Remembrance*

was spinning in the boom box. I finally had to accept that the tape was actually performing as advertised. Even the kid knew this: he'd pass me with a wink and say, "Hey Pete, you're trying to calm me down with that brain music, right?" And so I ordered a variety of Metamusic® tapes and played them all day long. The kids thought the music was weird and joked a lot about it. They couldn't understand why there were no vocal accompaniments, and they were pretty sure it was either Indian or Arabic in origin. They'd roll their eyes and shake their heads, but if I forgot to play a tape they'd pipe up with, "Hey Pete, what happened to the brain music?"

They liked it even if they didn't readily admit it. I started handing out tapes to play in their portable tape players. I'd catch a few secretly listening to something else with a lot of bass and volume. But the majority just sat there listening to METAMUSIC, quietly performing various tasks. It became a ritual. A kid would come up to me and ask for a "brain tape," then return to his seat and do the assignment. The first time I played *Concentration* for the group you'd swear—if you didn't know where you were—that the class was a prep school for serious students totally focused on some scholarly pursuit. I just sat and observed. When the tape ended, they all began to move and talk and drop pencils—which is their usual approach to scholarship.

I have looked out on the room as a METAMUSIC tape played and seen a kid's face so open, so pure and innocent, so peaceful he could have passed for a cherub. And I like to think the "brain tapes" helped get him there, if only for a short time. Because with my low voltage technology, I don't know if the tapes can effect permanent change. How much does an hour or two of METAMUSIC a day alleviate the stress and anxiety these kids live with all the time? But it works well enough for a few to leave some of that stress and anxiety outside the door when they come to school.

A supervisor of mine even tried it once. She was curious. So I gave her a tape player and *Remembrance* to listen to. She played it, thought it nice, and left. She returned the following morning to ask me where she could get a tape like that. It seems her deep-blue, funky mood had mysteriously lifted after listening to *Remembrance* that afternoon. Now she wanted something more permanent; something safer than Prozac®. I gave her a catalog. At the end of the school year, she came up and gave me a big hug. She was thoroughly pleased and grateful. Of course, the New York City Board of Education is a bureaucratic nightmare. They spend sixty million dollars for a six-week summer reading program and get minimal results. Some teachers have expressed interest in the "brain tapes." But the administrators seem less interested in buying them for students than they are in procuring personal notebook computers and cellular phones.

METAMUSIC works here, even if it only knocks back the demons for a few hours a day. What these kids could use is something intensive, something away from the city—like a trip to the

Institute for a *Gateway Voyage*®. They need a solid introduction to their higher selves, like the one I got during my own recent Voyage. Was that really my consciousness expanding to the size of my CHEC unit? Why did I awake one night on all fours, staring into a flow with my mind like a tunnel all around me? And what was that experience on my first trip to Focus 21, when I became almost infinitely large and infinitesimally small at the same time and seemed to possess the cosmos within me? Did I transcend or descend? Did I travel out or dive within? I don't know. But the mystery of who I am got a whole lot more mysterious.

The truth is, I try to get the kids in my classes out of the educational system the quickest way possible. The school system here doesn't nurture anybody. We need a new paradigm. And I think Hemi-Sync should become part of that new paradigm in the future and should immediately be incorporated into the present curriculum everywhere. Instead of marching kids up to a stage to listen to someone sing "I can fly," they need to take their own trips into the ether. Damn, this stuff works!

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